



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Robert L. Davis

SUBJECT: Cruising Abatement Program

DATE: May 31, 2006

Approved: /s/

Date: 06/01/06

This memorandum is prepared in response to the Mayor's March 2006 Budget Message that directs the Manager to review alternative options to address the problem of cruising in downtown.

Historically, motor vehicle "cruising" has occurred in the downtown corridor for many years and has created massive traffic congestion along Santa Clara Street from 17th Street to Montgomery Street. Cruising is an activity drawing a predominantly younger crowd that comes downtown to be near the large Entertainment Zone (EZ) and a population of approximately 11,000 nightclub patrons. Although many "cruisers" may not be old enough to enter an entertainment establishment, they come to be near the excitement and energy of the entertainment in downtown. The cruising brings a like crowd of young people on foot, which often causes traffic gridlock along the Santa Clara Street corridor. Cruising, and the ensuing traffic gridlock that it causes, impedes downtown residents' and entertainment/business patrons' ability to use Santa Clara Street and its many cross streets to move within the downtown corridor.

Past reductions to overtime funding for the cruising abatement program, as well as staffing reductions to the Traffic Enforcement Team, have reduced the Police Department's ability to maintain enforcement of the City's cruising ordinance. In addition, reductions in overtime funding for patrol of the Entertainment Zone have caused further erosion in cruising abatement activities due to the use of Cruise Management Detail (CMD) Officers to augment EZ enforcement demands. Continued development and the addition of more entertainment establishments in the downtown have created a growing demand for more EZ police coverage that continues to draw resources away from the cruising abatement program.

Options for Cruise Management

1. Deploy Cruise Management Personnel

The option currently being utilized to manage cruising is the deployment of Cruise Management Detail (CMD) personnel to address cruising early in the evening by issuing citations and attempting to keep traffic flowing. Due to staffing levels of CMD (one Sergeant and seven Officers) and their collateral assignment of enforcement in the Entertainment Zone after 10:00 P.M. on Thursday through Saturday nights, this has not

May 31, 2006

Subject: Cruising Abatement Program

Page 2

proven effective. Although CMD is assigned as cruise management, their primary responsibility on these nights is public safety in and around the Entertainment Zone. It is critical to have the CMD Officers in the Entertainment Zone to provide public safety and deterrence to criminal activity in and around the nightclub establishments.

2. Implement Traffic Diversions

Another option for cruising abatement would be to conduct traffic diversions out of the downtown. To accomplish a traffic diversion, approximately 50 Officers are required. Since the CMD does not have this staffing level, nor the overtime budget to support this activity, Officers from the surrounding beats and districts would need to be pulled in from beat patrol to facilitate the diversion. This practice, however, results in reduced patrol staffing to respond to areas outside of the downtown and creates a safety issue for the remaining Officers on beat patrol.

3. Redirect CMD from EZ Enforcement

The original premise of the Cruise Management Detail (CMD) was to address downtown cruising on a consistent basis each and every weekend. The CMD's efforts were effective as they were assigned to enforce traffic laws and prevent cruising in the downtown corridor with minimal duties in the EZ. With the demand for patrol in the EZ, the CMD's function has become dual purpose, that is, to control cruising as well as patrol the EZ. In order to enable the CMD to refocus on cruising abatement, it will also be necessary to seek options to staffing the EZ. Redirecting the CMD to address cruising abatement alone will result in additional overtime demands for EZ enforcement, or will result in additional beat patrol Officers being diverted to the EZ during critical enforcement hours.

4. Reinstate CMD Overtime Funding

The loss of overtime funding has had an adverse effect on the ability of the Police Department to provide effective cruise management along the Santa Clara Street corridor. With the reduction of overtime funding, the Department has had to eliminate augmentation of CMD officers with off-duty Officers on overtime. As a result, the Department has had to rely on swing shift Officers to clear gridlock along Santa Clara Street as well as to provide support to the EZ closing of nightclubs. This is often counter-productive and leads to Officer safety issues in adjoining police divisions or districts when numerous Officers from the swing shift are called to respond downtown to assist in cruise management or night club closing.

An alternate "cruising" enforcement approach would be to conduct traffic and cruising enforcement in conjunction with mini-diversions along Santa Clara Street during enforcement hours. Mini-diversions would be conducted only as traffic conditions warrant during peak cruising activity as follows:

- Close westbound Santa Clara traffic at 4th street, route traffic south bound
- Close eastbound Santa Clara traffic at Market street, route south or north
- No right turn on 2nd from Santa Clara

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

May 31, 2006

Subject: Cruising Abatement Program

Page 3

- Provide directional signage indicating “No Cruising Zone” and its enforcement
- Allow residents, business and nightclub patrons access to downtown
- Allow VTA continued access to Santa Clara and other streets

Mini-diversions would be implemented only as needed in order to minimize impact to the surrounding neighborhoods. This effort would require the use of off-duty Officers on overtime to make the plan effective. Current Bureau of Field Operations staffing levels cannot support this effort alone. To implement this plan effectively would require approximately 8 to 10 officers working overtime to conduct enforcement and monitor the above closures. The estimated overtime cost to conduct mini-diversions on Friday and Saturday nights during the cruising season would be approximately \$234,000.

/s/

ROBERT L. DAVIS
Chief of Police